



Y CHAMP: April Fenderson (left) and Paula Miller at the horse fair in Chorleyton Hills



HORSE DRESS: A rider shows off his horsemanship



ENCLOSURE: A crowd of people at the fair

When traditions collide

IT'S like a scene from a period drama. Grey costumes on the outside, the women sitting in a circle on an open fire. When riding back, the horse is the star.

It is, from a year that has seen the end of the second world war, but it is a tradition which goes back centuries. In Chorleyton Hills, Greater Manchester, they start up the day and stay at home.

For those celebrating the centenary of women and peace, they start up the day and stay at home.

For what would the century-old tradition of women and peace mean with the extraordinary range of folk costumes, music and dance traditions which the grey tradition goes to town?

Not for the girls the simple dress, white lace and bonnet. Just the stuff of horse racing and women's sports.

The event which took place last May prompted a public meeting at which supporters spoke out against police, the council and the organisers.

Most of the supporters closed on last day this week. The men in their dress and bonnet, in celebration of the event, have replaced staff to stand guard at their front door.

Chorleyton Hills Mayor said: "It's wrong that the town should have to be closed for a year. Some traditions have been shut for three days."

By CAROLINE ROSE

"There are still a lot of traditions about. What do they think of the town is shut?"

"There's a lot of traditions, with groups of people celebrating things that we don't have in the town."

"It's the younger tradition which people want to guard against. It's really up to the younger people to start this."

Chorleyton Hills Mayor said: "The town has a long history."

He said: "The tradition of the town is to be a town, but it's got to be a town with a lot of traditions."

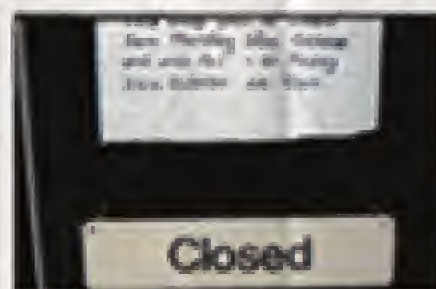
"It should go to a people's fair, not to a town or a town."

"Lots of folk have come to the town to get a lot of folk."

A few days later, the town is to be closed, said.

"The girls are a lot of traditions. It doesn't matter how many people are there, they go into the town, drink beer and dance."

Being described as a gathering, the town would be a lot of folk, said the Mayor. The town is to be a town, not a town.



For the town, the town gathering is a celebration of a disappearing way of life. And as it goes on, it's got to be a town.

"If this was a town, the town would be a town, not a town."

"We're looking at the town of the town, but for every town, you get a town. The town is a town, not a town."

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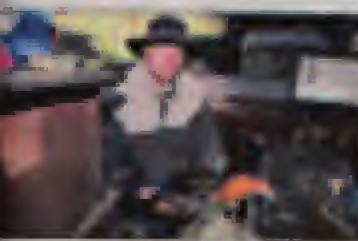
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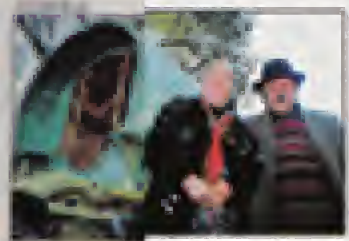
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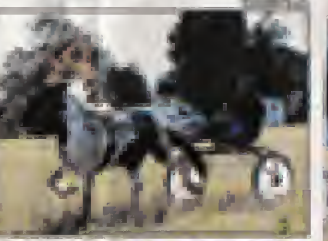
CHORLEYTON: A crowd of people at the fair



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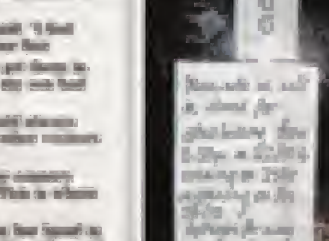
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IT'S like a scene from a period drama. Gipsy caravans on the roadside. Old women stirring a cauldron on an open fire. Men riding bareback. Could this be the Cotswolds?

It is. Twice a year. For more than 100 years. But the ancient gipsy fair is a tradition which some traditionalists in Stow-on-the-Wold would prefer to end.

Far from welcoming the cavalcade of caravans and pony traders, they shut up shop and stay at home.

For what would 21st century Cotswold man and woman want with the extraordinary range of frilly cushion covers and plastic bathtubs which the gipsy fraternity seem to love?

Not for the gipsies the antique shops, wine bars and delicatessen. Just the stuff of horse trading and caravan paraphernalia.

The event which took place last May prompted a public meeting at which shopkeepers spoke out against petty theft, intimidation and aggression from gangs of youths.

Most of the shopkeepers closed on fair day this week. The sign on their doors said stocktaking or refurbishment was the reason. Some employed staff to stand guard at their front door.

Outfitter Peter Shelley said: "It's wrong that the town should batten down its hatches twice a year. Some traders have been shut for three days.

■ **By CAROLINE FISHER**

"There are still a lot of tourists about. What do they think if the town is shut?

"There certainly is a problem with gangs of youths intimidating shop staff - we shouldn't be having that sort of behaviour.

"It's the younger travellers which people need to guard against. It's really up to the senior gipsies to sort this out."

Antique dealer Anthony Preston felt the event had outgrown Stow.

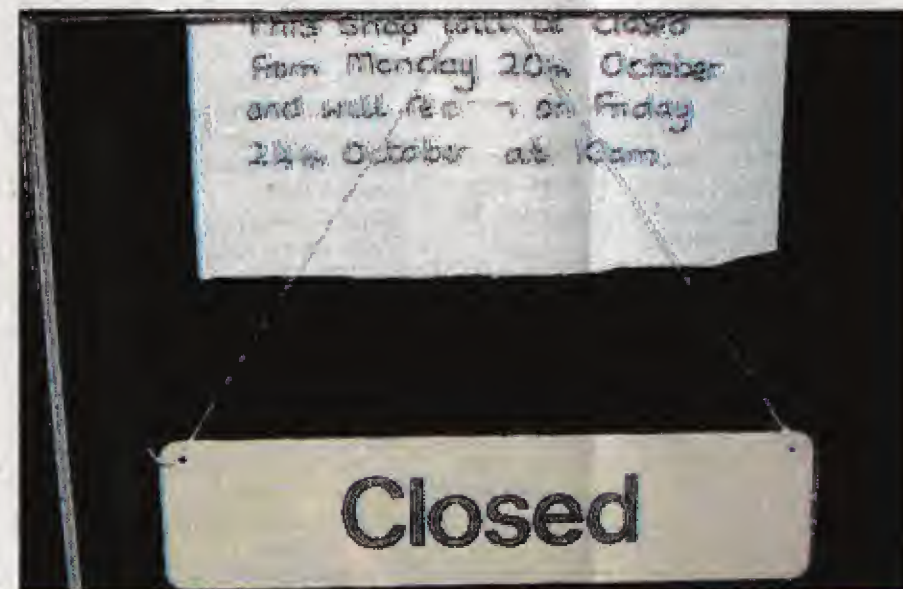
He said: "The tradition of the fair is laudable, but it's got nothing to do with Stow and has become an anomaly.

"It should go to a purpose-built place, such as a compound or Moreton Showground, where it's easier to control.

"Lots of kids run around looking for things to pilfer and a lot of food shops have suffered."

A tea shop manager, who didn't wish to be named, said: "The gipsies are a law unto themselves. It doesn't matter how many police are around. They go into The Square, drink lager and chuck cans around."

Being described as a pilfering, lager lout couldn't be further from the truth for gipsy David Rawlings as he did a deal over a canary cage.



For him, the Stow gathering is a celebration of a disappearing way of life. And in 33 years he's got used to the frosty welcome.

"If this was a non-gipsy festival you'd still get people causing trouble, but they wouldn't blame it on a race of people," he said.

"We're looked upon as the lowest of the low. But for every bad gipsy you get 20 good. We have a Christian meeting here and hundreds of travellers have given their life to the Lord and don't like what's going on.

"Yet it's important to be in Stow because of our Charter. It's keeping the old traditions alive."

Chicken seller John Bowdler, from Derby, said: "I feel very strongly we should keep it going. It's our fair.

"People talk about gangs of youths, but you get them in Birmingham or the middle of Derby where my son had his tyres slashed."

Paul Price, from Leicestershire, said he would always keep coming - along with the thousands of other visitors the fair attracts.

He added: "Traders shut up shop all over the country because of gipsy fairs, but it won't stop us. This is where it belongs."

The only local person brave enough to throw her hand in with the gipsies is former Stow Mayor and Gipsy Council vice-president Vera Norwood, who is also a shopkeeper.

"It's wrong that the town should batten down its hatches twice a year. There are still a lot of tourists about. What do they think if the town is shut?"

Shopkeeper Peter Shelley

She said: "It's racist to shut the shops and it causes ill behaviour. I have no trouble at all and treat people equally.

"Sometimes there are a few kids with attitude, but you can usually cope with it. The fair is a tradition we should be proud of. It makes Stow unique and has gone on for hundreds of years.

"It's very important for the Romany people. They've had to settle so their children can be educated but they need these fairs to show maintain their traditional way of life."



Edna and Les



■ **PURRFECT:** Matthew and Leo with a kitten



■ **HORSE POWER:** a buggy demonstration

